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THE EVOLUTION OF RELIGION¹

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The use of the term evolution in connection with religion is subject to at least two objections. On the one side are those who insist that religion is the gift of God and therefore has no historical development. And on the other the biologist may object to the use of the term in any such general sense as a student of social science must adopt.

To the first critic it may be replied that when he asserts or implies that religion has not developed like other elements in human experience the facts are against him. Whatever may have been its origin, religion exhibits phenomena akin to those observable in social institutions to which the term "evolution" may legitimately be applied. The old distinction of the Deists between the natural and a revealed religion has been outgrown, not so much because it did not involve large elements of truth, but because as a final answer to the problems set by the history of Christianity it failed to take into account those psychological and sociological factors with which the modern student is particularly concerned. All religions are phases of religion.

To the other class of critics it must be replied that if biologists ever had a monopoly on the term evolution their exclusive rights have long since expired. The conception given the word by the *Origin of Species* and general biological usage is a particular phase of a view of the world as old as reflective thought. The service which biology has rendered the social sciences at this point has largely been confined to the region of method, vocabularies, and analogies. If these analogies have too often been overemphasized and made to do yeoman service in the name of some non-biological science, they have none the less made it possible to

¹ This paper presents in substance one of a series of addresses given at the University of Chicago in honor of the centenary of the birth of Darwin.

realize that, whatever precise definition may be given the term evolution, there is a large measure of similarity between certain processes in social history and certain others in the building up of cellular organisms. Outside of the strictly biological sciences the word must be used in a large sense, but it is not identical with mere change or growth. It is possible to trace religion as one of the functional expressions of life itself through increasingly complicated and more highly differentiated activities and institutions, as that life both of individuals and societies seeks to adjust itself more effectively to its environment. The result of such vital activity is to produce, as it were, species of religions, between which, as for example Brahmanism and Mohammedanism, there is only a generic likeness.

To justify the legitimacy of the use of the term evolution in a reasonably strict sense, this paper will discuss (1) what religion is; (2) its development into species of religions according as its expression has been conditioned by its environment; (3) the persistence of vestiges of lower religious forms, concepts, and institutions in the more highly developed; and, (4) the struggle for the survival of the socially fittest among religions.

I. THE NATURE OF RELIGION

There have been times in which men have endeavored to arrive at the conception of religion by abstracting from Christianity its characteristic elements. Other attempts have been made to extend this process of abstraction to all religions and thus to discover that which is, to so speak, a generic concept. The difficulty with such search after a bit of scholastic realism is evident. Generic religion never existed apart from religions, and religions never existed except as interests and institutions of people. There is imperative need that all students of the subject, and especially theologians, should emancipate themselves from scholastic abstractions, and frankly recognize that religion is not a thing in itself, possessed of independent, abstract, or metaphysical existence, but is a name for one phase of concrete human activity. It is only from a strictly social point of view that either religion or religions will in any measure be properly understood.

We know only people who worship in various ways and with various conceptions of what or whom they worship.

Yet while men possess *religions* and not merely *religion*—religions of all sorts, from the simplest custom of the savage to the profundity of Brahmanism and the redemptive gospels of the Buddhist and the Christian—the comparative study of human activities expressed in these different religions has, however, discovered within them *religion* as a common divisor, as it were; viz., a particular functioning of life itself, as truly and universally human as the impulse of sex and self-preservation.

If we attempt to formulate this common element, or rather to describe this functional expression of life expressed in all religions, we must study comparatively both the highly developed religious systems and the simplest type of religion as it exists among primitive people. That is to say, while not overlooking the more complex systems as a means, so to speak, of determining the direction taken by evolution and thus better fitting ourselves to appreciate religion as never absolutely static, we must study the simplest religious organisms in order to understand the more complicated. To push the biological analogy farther, it might be said that the “cell” of religion is man’s conscious attempt to place himself in beneficial relationship with those superhuman forces in his world upon which he realizes his dependence, and which he treats as he would treat persons whom he wished to aid him.

It is obvious that the content of such a formal definition will vary according to the conception of what constitutes this superhuman environment; and that this variety of estimate will affect the methods which a man adopts in making that environment propitious. A study of even the most primitive religion leads one to two convictions apparently paradoxical: religion does not necessarily imply a belief in a supreme person, and yet, in religion, environment is conceived of in the same way that men conceive of persons. Therein the functioning of life in religion differs from the functioning of life in the satisfaction of the impulse of sex and food-seeking. True religion does not, as Monier-Williams would insist, postulate the existence of one living and true God of infinite power, wisdom, and love. That would exclude too many

religious customs and rites. Men have worshiped fetiches or animals or sacred stones. Such objects are regarded as elements in the environment which affect human interests, and therefore, without being of necessity consciously personified, are treated as if they were personal.

There are a number of theories undertaking to show how this attitude of mind was induced; but all are more or less unsatisfactory. Some find the cause in fear, or dreams, or regard for ancestors, or the appetencies of sex. Doubtless there is truth in all of these hypotheses but we are not absolutely sure as to just how religion came into existence any more than we are sure how human life itself arose. We can, however, see clearly that the functional significance of religion is an elemental expression of the second of the two elemental impulses of life itself, namely, to propagate and protect itself. Religion is life functioning in the interest of self-protection. It differs from similar functional expressions of life in that (1) it treats certain elements of its environment personally (though not necessarily as a person), and (2) it seeks to make these friendly and so helpful. One or the other of these two elements has almost invariably been overlooked in studies of religion, but both are indispensable to the concept. Religion utilizes personal experience and uncompromisingly presupposes personalism not, let it be repeated, in a sense of any systematic world-view, but, in a sense doubtless unconsciously at the first but with ever-increasing clearness of conception, it treats the environment as it would treat human beings; and religion is just as uncompromisingly functional, not only in adjusting the individual or the group to its environment, but also in the attempt to adjust the environment personally considered to the person or the community. Thus Schleiermacher's conception of religion as a feeling of dependence is only part of the truth. To it must be added the conscious effort after reconciliation. It is this two-fold modification of the elemental functioning of life in the interest of self-preservation that distinguishes religion from so many activities with which it has been intimately associated, like hunting and grain-planting, marriage and burial.

Obviously the inception of this radically human attitude toward

its world is lost in the unrecorded struggles by which humanity raised itself above other forms of animal life with which it is genetically united. But one's ignorance here does not impugn the fact that such a use of experience was actually made.

Sometime, somewhere—just when and where it matters not—there appeared a man who first of all living creatures, with the new impulses of a genuine person, attempted to adjust himself consciously to the outer world upon which he saw himself dependent, by an attempt to make that outer world favorable to himself. It makes little difference how he conceived that outer world or which one of its particular aspects first impressed him. Any one of the various theories of the origin of religion might here suffice. The essential thing is that, in his passion to protect his life and to insure his continuous existence as a person, he attempted consciously to enjoy or to win the favor of the extra-human environment with which he found himself involved. And that, so far as we know, no animal other than man ever attempted to accomplish.

Nor is it necessary to insist that all religions are genetically related in a sense that one has been derived from another. The historico-religious method at the present time is in danger of mistaking similarities between religions for genealogical relations. Thus in the comparative study, let us say, of Christianity, there is strong temptation to insist that elements of Babylonian myths go to constitute the very content of Christianity. That a certain degree of genealogical relationship in this particular case may have existed may well be admitted, but a too rigorous application of the comparative genealogical method in the study of religion is certain to distort the facts. If there is anything undeniable in the study of society it is that human nature is essentially the same, and that when facing the same social needs it functions in a generic sort of way. A striking illustration of the fact that independent activity of individuals produces similar results is to be seen in a study of inventions. The commonest occurrence is for men subject to the stimulation of similar social need, in absolute independence of each other, to produce instruments and processes practically identical. An even more striking illustration of this general truth is that

all civilizations precipitate practically the same moral codes when they arrive at the same stage of complicated social life. So in the case of religions, the striking similarities which occur between religions belonging to the primitive class and religions belonging to the highly social class are not to be interpreted as necessarily involving imitative, or in fact any, historical relationship. Such similarities both in institution and in process of evolution can often be sufficiently well accounted for by a generic religious impulse in humanity which tends to produce customs, rites, institutions, and creeds in answer to individual and social needs.

The evolution of religion viewed historically is nothing more or less than the organization of religions by the differentiation, through the use of social experience, of the practices, institutions, philosophies, by which men have attempted to justify, rationalize, direct, and give value to this phase of the elemental impulse of personality.

At the risk of excessive repetition, one thing needs particularly to be emphasized, namely, the worshiper not only seeks to appease that in his environment which he regards as conditioning his welfare, but he also undertakes to put himself into proper relationship with that which he appeases. The essence of religion is not a feeling of dependence, but the impulse toward reconciliation with that which engenders such a feeling. The moment a man thinks that the highest power in his environment is unreconcilable, his relations therewith become utterly passive, i.e., impersonal; he ceases to be religious and becomes simply a fatalist. And fatalism is not religion, for it lacks the fundamental attitude of religion which is the effort to establish favorable relations with the super-environment. In other words, the situation which religion would establish is one of personal harmony between the worshiper and that worshiped, no matter how crude or superstitious that relationship may be. The primitive savage who by mysterious rites seeks to induce his corn god to give him a good harvest differs no whit, so far as his psychological attitude is concerned, from the most philosophically religious person who seeks to enter into healthful personal relations with a supreme and infinite God through an intelligent faith that the universe may be con-

ceived of as involving a cosmic personality possessed of purpose and love. How true this is, is apparent in the work of Christian missionaries. They do not need to engender the religious impulse—they need simply to give new content and intellectual control to that impulse. A man could never make a religious convert of a dog. The South Sea cannibal could become a Christian because he was first of all religious.

II. THE EVOLUTION OF THE PERSONAL INTERPRETATION OF ENVIRONMENT

It will be understood from what has already been said that the term extra- or superhuman environment does not always necessarily involve personality. What the term means is simply some power other and more than human which a man regards as having influence upon his life and fortunes. The fact that such elements of the environment *are treated* as if they were personal, is only to say that religion involves an extension of experience over into environment as a means of interpreting that environment in the interests of a helpful reconciliation. Such an act is not unlike the way in which, to speak figuratively, a living organism makes the assumption, that its environment discovered by experience is capable of forming a part of a dynamic situation. Thus far Ward is correct in saying that religion is in man what instinct is in animals. But only in so far, for did an animal even seek to placate nature?

The essential matter in the evolution of religion as in all evolution is the transformation of the original organism through its relation with its environment and the nucleating about itself—if the figure may be allowed—of the cells of other experiences into species of the same genus. And this is accomplished by the transformation of the mass of experience with which humanity adjusts itself to its environment to which it must submit and from which it must derive assistance.

1. Primitive religions generally deal with environment directly. The primitive gods in the earliest strata of survivals and literature in which we can trace religious concepts were natural forces. The heavens and earth, fire, water, and wind, the sun,

moon, and planets—these natural objects were worshiped but they were not personified. Man found himself face to face with the awfulness of Nature. He saw how dependent he was upon this nature; how the rising of the river would flood and sweep away his hut; how the rain would come from heaven to give him grass for his cattle, how the sun would drive the animals he hunted into the deep forests. He naturally wanted to make the river and the heavens propitious. A little later, he very likely turned animistic and regarded natural forces as the home or the visible expression of personal gods; but at the start he worshiped unpersonified natural objects. But he began to treat them personally—as he treated the other members of his tribe or other tribes when he wanted help.

If we go even farther back than philology can carry us and study religion as we discover it in the most primitive folk, we find corroboration for this view, although with this difference: there seem to be some tribes that have not risen to the conception of the great natural forces as those that are to be appeased and who therefore concern themselves rather with items in their natural environment. In fact, anything unusual is apt to be regarded by primitive men as a good or a malign influence. In either case it needs to be treated with respect and if possible placated. A rock over which someone has fallen, a cave in the darkness of which someone has been lost, a curious root that was discovered when one became ill, a tree that had been struck by lightning—all have been regarded as operative forces in a man's situation which needed in some way to be placated.

Here, too, an early step was to regard these natural objects as the residence of some spirit, good or evil. Thus fetichism arose as a sort of limitation of the lesser nature-worship. Not all natural objects were significant, and even those which were might lose their meaning if the spirit abandoned them.

It is possible to draw a distinction between magic and religion as soon as religion begins to take on its more social form. The witch is different from the priest if for no other reason than that her arts are anti-social. But despite the weighty names to be quoted against such a view, it would seem to me that non-injurious

magic may be treated as the vestige of a rudimentary religion preserved and observed by specially empowered persons. For there is in such magic, e.g., rain-making, that "will to conciliate" as well as to control which, as the complement to the "will to power," is the very sign manual of religion. But this is not to say that religion developed from magic. The fundamental difference between magic and religion lies not in that magic was originally anti-social and so nefarious, but that in the course of social evolution it is seen to be so. As religion develops, certain rites are seen to apply only the impersonal principle that like affects like through the agency of a specially empowered person; but religion seeks to conciliate super-human influences by means implying personal relations and attributes. This distinction between personal and impersonal is gained through the increased social experience. That practice, which once implied a certain personal analogy, is seen to be irrational and so impersonal, and ultimately anti-social. The primitive religion thus outgrown becomes magic, and although socially condemned, continues as a survival. And the reason why it is condemned is in large measure the development of a knowledge of natural processes. A growing science thus relegates certain elements of a religion to superstition.

Similarly, too, in the case of the worship of dead ancestors, a stage in religious development to be found all but universally in simple civilizations. Whatever may have been the origin of such a custom it is sufficiently clear that the dead were regarded as important factors in determining good and evil fortune. To propitiate them is therefore good policy as well as tribal piety.

2. With the emergence of actual tribal organization a new phase in this religious interest appeared. A developing civilization does not always, it is true, immediately react upon the conception of the god, but in so far as the religious concept develops it invariably passes through a stage in which these forces which have been treated *like* persons are treated *as* persons. That is to say, contemporaneously with the development of the clan, religion entered into the stage of naïve anthropomorphic or anthropopathic religions. Such a development was inevitable for people

sufficiently constructive to become a part of the main current of civilization. All others, like the Black Fellows of Australia, preserve the religious ideas in forms as primitive as their civilizations. Such personification, however, does not seem to have proceeded uniformly. In some cases a tribe would have as its own a god who was the personification of some natural force and would worship him by attributing to him those qualities which, thanks to its social development, the tribe as a whole believed to be the most ideal. Without exception these tribal gods are regarded as normally in a state of reconciliation with the tribe. Generally they are regarded as the fathers of their tribes. In other words, they are believed to partake of the same elemental quality as primitive civilization itself. They are, however, subject to paroxysms of anger evidenced by the defeat of the tribe in battle, by the outbreak of disease, and by various other misfortunes. In such cases they must be placated by gifts. In this we see one of the various contributing influences that made sacrifice a social institution, although there are other influences quite as powerful. At other times a god appears to be particularly favorable in that he sends good weather and good fortunes. At such times his kindness needs to be appreciated by gifts. Thus arises the sort of sacrifice which is not intended to appease but to thank the tribal god for his help.

But the most essential element in the tribal religion is the conception of the god as the supreme member of the tribe. It is true he is not believed to appear frequently, but at critical moments some member is likely to see him and get some word of encouragement or warning. Further, there have been few peoples who have attained the tribal form of society in which there is not some particular person or family regarded as in some way the god's special representative. Such persons instruct the tribe as to the will of the god, serve as priests, and, under the god's direction, establish great feasts of which the god partakes. Probably at this point we find the most important contributing source of sacrifice. The social group includes the god and he shares in the experiences of the tribe, be they sad or joyous. And it should be noted that the rites of religions had their origin in the enjoyment of life as

truly as in its misery and fear. Men thought of the gods as their companions as truly as their judges.

This tribal god in some tribes may, so to speak, be assisted by a number of secondary gods; but polytheism is not necessarily an element of tribal religion, and even when a tribe worships several gods it is likely to have one particularly its own. In fact, as the tribal civilization develops, in many cases, particularly among the Semites and the Aryans, it would seem as if there were two classes of gods—those which represent the material forces more or less personified and constitute a sort of super-divine body of deities to whom worship is to be paid as the final sources of good fortune, and, along with these, so to speak, the working class among the gods. Other tribes carry along with their single tribal god a phase of magic which may be said to be the survival of some more primitive religious practice. Similarly, customs, the meaning of which has long been forgotten, may be carried along as essential elements of a developing religion. So important may these customs become as to give almost its full content to the religion.

3. The fact that the tribal god was regarded as, so to speak, the responsible party in tribal history, led to another phase of religion, the monarchical. Such a term is at best unsatisfactory but serves to indicate how the thought of God develops by the extension to him of new political conceptions. The national god must be superior to the tribal chieftain. As a chieftain developed in power by conquest so as to extend the power of the tribe over other tribes, it has been all but uniformly true that the tribal god was regarded as victorious over the gods of the conquered tribes. Thus, as the tribe itself through conquest became the head of a quasi-nation, did the god become a conquering monarch. Only it did not at all follow that the tribe which had been absorbed or conquered would give up its god. It might continue to worship him in the hope that ultimately he would assert himself and give deliverance to his people. Or, on the other hand, as the tribe was incorporated into a new political entity, its god might become a member of the royal court of the supreme God. There is many a nation whose religious history shows the struggle between the worship of the two sets of deities. Thus we find, in the history of

Israel, a long succession of struggles between the worship of Jehovah and that of the Baalim and the Syrian gods of the high places belonging to the conquered Canaanites. This struggle is likely to be particularly violent when the two sets of gods are brought together, not by war or conquest, but by the intermingling of civilizations.

For conquest is not the only source of the development of the king god. Political development as such leads to this more developed conception. It may often be that a number of tribes have the same god. These may federate, as in the tribes of Israel, religion being the sole or at least the chief bond of the political unity. But even such federation is not necessary for the development of the idea of God. The transformation of the tribe from nomadic to agricultural life has been accompanied by a transformation of the conception of God and has given him new attributes, as in Zoroastrianism. Sometimes this addition has been made through the religious teachers or the priests; sometimes it has been unconsciously due to the rise of new economic conceptions born of social evolution. As the agricultural stage of social evolution has passed into the commercial and urban, the new powers of the chieftains have been used as media for shaping new prerogatives for the god. His relations become less those of the father of the family and more those of the king, increasingly political and forensic. It is not too much to say that in the case of all tribes whose development we can trace across the various stages of social evolution, the idea of monarchy, which, however different its social institutions may have been, has characterized some period of every developed society, has also colored religions. The god is not subject to the will of the people; the people and their material environment are to obey him. Obedience to his law becomes thus a condition of his rendering his people aid.

At this point the really great religions have made two important transitions:

1. The superhuman monarch of the tribe has come to be regarded as the superhuman monarch of the world, the king of creation. It has not followed that all the other gods have been regarded as non-existent, for in many cases they have been treated as devils

or saints. But the passage to genuine monotheism cannot infrequently be traced through this monarchical stage.

The divine monarch is supreme over human subjects. He arranges nature. The thunder is his voice, the wind his messenger, the earthquake the creature of his will. Men begin to think of him philosophically, and so transcendental may the thought of him become that the effort to realize the now supreme and increasingly ethical conception of his character gives rise to a genuine if naïve theology.

2. The second transition has been the moral elevation of the idea of God. This change has been the work of the prophet. In primitive religion the prophet in any true sense of the word is unknown. There are only medicine-men, necromancers, witches, and the like. But few peoples ever come to the universal monarchy conception of its god without seeing in him the standard of morality. If such a transition is impossible a new god is adopted as the new conscience needs a more sensitively moral God. If, as in the case of classical mythology, gods are past reformation, they are pensioned off with conventional honors and allowed to pass into innocuous desuetude on some mountain where their example will not injure the morals of young people. In the extent of this moral idealism of its idea of God, the Hebrew religion is unique. It seems to have passed through the earlier stages of religious evolution, but as in no other religion did this eventuate in a monarch of absolute righteousness, hating iniquity. That this was the case was due to the work of the prophets who, from an exceptional religious experience, taught an unwilling nation ideals that were to serve as the basis of the non-monarchical ethical religion of Jesus.

This monarchial conception has given rise to the most precise theologies. It is easy to see why. Political experience is so universal, political institutions are so subject to legal adjustment, and legal analogies are so intelligible, that it has been comparatively easy to systematize religious relations under the general rubrics of statecraft. Thus righteousness has been thought of as the observance of the laws of the god, given through divinely-inspired teachers, and punishment has been attached to the violation of

such laws in precisely the same way as to the violation of laws of the king. The pardoning of sins has been a royal prerogative, although sometimes needing justification in the way of vicarious suffering by some competent sacrificial animal or person, while the rewards of the righteous have been pictured by figures drawn from the triumphs of earthly kings, just as in primitive societies the future was regarded as the "happy hunting-ground."

3. Only a few religions have as yet progressed beyond the monarchical stage. In Brahmanism, religion has been denied content and direction by an impersonal cosmic philosophy, and two of the three great religions of Semitic origin—Judaism and Christianity—have moved over into a quasi-transcendental personal sphere. But the theologies of even these religions have been developed on the monarchical analogy. In Christianity, however, the influence of Jesus has resulted in the retranslation of the divine king into the divine Father. His own experience here furnished the interpretative analogy. Unaffected by philosophy he expressed religion in terms of most generic experience, and thus may fairly be said to have closed the cycle of purely religious anthropomorphic formulas. But the Christian religion has not been content. It has sought rationalizing formulas in which to synthesize itself with such elements of its environment as are contained in a growing world-view. Nor is this synthesis the mere establishment of a static situation. All three elements—the world-view, Christianity, and the situation itself—are in process of evolution. Paternity can never serve as a synthetic theological and philosophical concept. True as it is for experience it has been too obviously an analogy for theology. Historical orthodoxy is built on divine sovereignty, but there have already begun to appear signs that in Christianity the social mind is redescribing that environment upon which men find themselves dependent in terms more consonant with scientific thought than are those derived from monarchy. Here indeed may be said to be the real crisis in which theology finds itself in highly civilized countries. Convinced as are men of scientific temperament that the monarchical conception already anachronistic in a democracy is totally inadequate to express cosmic relations, a rapidly developing scientific thought has not yet reached sufficiently dis-

tinct conclusions to enable one to forecast exactly the next stage in the evolution of those conceptions by which modern men shall make intelligible to themselves the significance of the religious life.

There are those who insist that there is no next stage; that the situation in which religion and science find themselves is capable of no further progress; that the future is to be religionless; that humanity is to replace God, and that ethics is to replace religion as the means by which to regulate the impulse toward reconciliation with a personal environment. But this forecast seems to me untenable. Tendencies have developed so rapidly within the past four or five years looking to the justification, from the point of both psychology and sociology, of religion as a normal attitude, that it is hardly likely that the impulse to adjust oneself to the non-human, cosmic environment, conceived of in some personal way, will disappear. We face, it is true, the question as to what is meant by the term "personality" when applied to that appalling environment which astronomy, biology, and geology have discovered and are discovering. In a certain sense we are back again where religion began its evolution. We can no longer think of God in the way of a naïve anthropomorphism. We no longer think of God as sending plagues; we have fastened that indictment upon bacteria. We no longer believe that eclipses are punishments for our sins or that famines and earthquakes are due to divine displeasure. Like our primitive ancestors we are face to face with the forces of Nature. Indeed, we are not altogether sure that we ought to speak even about forces. We are really face to face with the Whole.

Is religion then to be replaced by natural science, or is it to enter upon a new cycle of development, again starting with nature? Unless all signs fail there is strong probability that this second alternative is to be realized. But modern man will start with a vastly richer experience than that of the primitive man who first endeavored to adjust himself consciously to the same environment. If we cannot think of the Whole in terms of monarchy we can yet think of it with Jesus through the discovery within it of the presence of personality. For the fundamental presupposition of any exploration of the universe is that its phenomena can be restated in terms of human thought. But we ourselves must be included

in the Whole of things, and we as human personalities are just as truly the expression of the forces resident in that environment as are the laws of physics. The Whole must at least include those phenomena to which we give the name of personality. And may we not add that, if development of the organism is determined by its environment, these very phenomena argue similar in the whole. For as far as social experience shows, personality is evoked only in personal relations.

The modern man as truly as the primitive man is an element in a situation which demands harmony between himself and all its other elements. To attempt such harmony involves precisely the same attitude of mind as that which has found expression in all religion. The first impression that scientific investigation may make on some minds is that of the doom of religion, but a sober second thought is likely to bring the conviction that, so far from this being the case, our wider knowledge, infinitesimal as it is, of the universe which includes man as well as stars, evokes more strongly than ever that impulse which is the very heart of religion. History cannot be reduced to social processes unaffected by the so-called natural forces. To reinterpret God is not to dissolve him into a mere social survival.

To men who are indifferent to some of the elements in the problem, whether on the side of religion or of science, such a recasting of religion may seem impossible. When Socrates endeavored to free the minds of the Athenians from an erroneous, because imperfect, religious interpretation of their world, they killed him for atheism. Conversely, when earnest Christian men have attempted to utilize the findings of science in the interests of a cosmic conception of God and of religion there have not been wanting those who, in the spirit of Haeckel, have insisted upon a thoroughgoing materialism mitigated only by impersonal social forces. But the time for logomachy is past. An antithesis between terms, neither of which we can accurately define, is indefensible. It makes little difference whether a man calls himself a materialist or an idealist so long as he recognizes that there exist in the universe men and women. The religious man needs to use all the phenomena, to which we have applied for want of a better term

the word "personal." What we call that synthesis of thought and will and value judgments is of small significance compared to the fact that the actions to which we apply those terms really exist. And whether or not we get that interpretation of the universe, which, for lack of a better term, we call personal, from reading over into it our experiences, the fact remains that there are phenomena in the extra-human elements of environment which can be so interpreted. To recognize such elements as conditioning the outcome of the situation in which they and we mutually react is religious. For religion, whatever the interpretation it has given to its environment, has not created that environment. Whatever power social progress may have had to reconstitute situations in which men become religious, ideas have been only a part of environment. Religion no more lives in a solipsistic world that does housekeeping. A man used fire in precisely the same way when he thought it contained phlogiston as he uses it today when he explains it in terms of chemical dissolution and recombination. So religion persists in humanity regardless of the magic or the politics or the philosophy with which men have endeavored to give the rational correlate to the elemental constitutive functioning of the personal life. Fishes did not invent the ocean and religion did not invent God; it has gradually found, understood, and experienced a God who existed as one element of an objective environment which antedated and evoked experience.

III. THE PERSISTENCE OF SURVIVALS IN RELIGION

But evolution in religion no more than in a living organism is a matter of ungenetic change. Each new stage in its expression perpetuates in a greater or less degree vestiges of previous stages. Religions have their embryology as truly as their physiology. Just as the human body in its present condition has within it the vestiges which mark the survival of organs which man no longer needs but which were essential to some lower forms of life which humanity has recapitulated, so does each new stage in religious evolution perpetuate those less-developed stages from which it has emerged. It could not be otherwise. Religion does not exist by itself, any more than life does. As already has been said, strictly speaking

there is no such thing as religion in the abstract. There are only people functioning religiously, holding religious ideas and customs, and incorporating them in religion institutions. I cannot help feeling that the recognition of this very simple fact would relieve some of our friends who seem to be greatly concerned to rehabilitate the mediaeval realism. We have long since passed from thinking of scientific law as doing anything or as being anything except a generalization drawn from experiment and observation. We no longer speak about the state as an entity existing apart from legislators and governors and the other machinery of what we call the body politic. Similarly it is time to realize that when we speak about religion we are speaking about the activities of real people acting and reacting in very real social situations from which institutions, customs, and programs evolve.

Now, real people are vastly interesting subjects of study, and no less so because of their inconsistencies. Sometimes we complacently speak as if in the political field the modern man was quite delivered from the crudities of primitive societies; and yet we lynch criminals and plead the "higher law" for acquitting murderers. It is difficult not to see in such actions the recrudescence of the state of mind of primitive social groups. So, too, in our economic life we cling most vigorously to the formulas of competition when, as a matter of fact, with a rapidity that we deliberately refuse to recognize, we are legalizing a conception of collective bargaining that gives the lie to *laissez-faire*. It is not abnormal therefore to find that religious people, even very intelligent religious people, include in their religious thinking and practices some of the elements which were once the dominating characteristics of a religion in its more simple stages.

1. Reference has already been made to magic, but we find non-magical survivals of primitive religion in all stages of religious development. In fact, a superstition may fairly be described as a vestige of some element of religious experience which has come over from a stage in which it was essential to a religion. One might almost say that to be superstitious is to suffer religious appendicitis. There is no cure for it but surgery. Thus there are women who would not dare say their children are unusually well without

knocking three times on wood, and there are men who would hesitate to be one of a party of thirteen at a table. Who would think a wedding complete without rice-throwing? What baseball club does not have its mascot? Now all of these simple-minded practices which presumably intelligently religious people practice are the survivals of some ancient religious custom of our far-away ancestors.

2. Then, too, religious institutions perpetuate, though generally without the knowledge of their devotees, elements of earlier types of institutionalized religion. The pious Mohammedan still ties rags to trees to remind genii and saints of his prayers and their duties. Even where a religion develops freely many early elements survive. Modern liberal Judaism presents striking illustrations of such phenomena and Christianity has possibly even more striking ones. Indeed, so far has the recognition of religious survivals progressed that, if certain tendencies in a modern theological world were to triumph, religion would have to be regarded as little more than history. The most devout churchmen among us might turn out to be Jerahmeelites or followers of Gilgamesh. But barring these extreme views, even a superficial knowledge of history enables one to know that the Saturnalia festival is preserved at Christmas time. In fact, much of the cult in any religion is composed of customs, the original meaning of which has been forgotten and which have become sacred or symbolical simply through age. Recall by way of familiar illustration the robes of some of our clergy which perpetuated the dress of the ancient world. The ritual of the Roman Catholic church is particularly rich in such survivals. If these vestiges are not regarded as sacrosanct, they are not without their aesthetic value. Some men will chant creeds they would not otherwise repeat. Almost any religious ceremony is enhanced by this means of linking the modern world with the great course of human history. In fact he would be a most impracticable iconoclast who would ask the complete elimination of cult from a religion or any institution that stands for the conception of the continuity of human experience.

3. In our religious thinking, these survivals and particularly those intellectual forms which have been derived from social expe-

rience, play an important and not always a harmless rôle. As has already been stated, the controlling theological ideas of practically all religions were shaped in the great creative period in which local gods become national and a national religion passed on to monotheism. The monarchical analogies are those which show most pertinacity. In fact, in our modern world there are few men who have thus far deliberately undertaken to set forth a theology that shall embody the changed conception of man's relation to the universe itself. It is, however, altogether unfair to think that such experiments have not been made and are not being made. Religious thought is not nearly so anachronistic as those who know nothing about it appear to suppose. It is true that it can never be quite as precise as a doctor's thesis, but it is making an honest, and I venture to say intelligent, effort to justify and systematize religion from the vantage ground of our modern experience and world-view. Religious thought can hardly be expected to reshape itself at the behest of every man who has his particular theory to champion. It, like scientific views themselves, will shape itself slowly, in common with the movement of the social mind; but such reshaping as truly as such a movement is already in progress.

Yet, in this retranslation of the situation in which religion is involved because of its appropriation of elements of new social experience, we find our thought and to some extent our experience controlled by the survivals of the monarchical type of religion. In this we are at one with men generally, but with this exception: no other type of religion has ever been held by a civilization as industrial and complicated as ours. It is almost impossible, therefore, at this point, to classify other religions with Christianity. Its nearest species is an academic Brahmanism and neo-Buddhism. In the former the ideal is perfectly distinct, namely, to eliminate and to raise the soul in contemplation as far as possible into the region of the impersonal or at least non-individual. Neo-Platonism somewhat in like fashion attempted to bring man to the Heavenly Vision by ecstasy, but was never able to free itself from the control of survivals and was handicapped by an empirical psychology that frustrated its search for its own ideals. Neo-Buddhism, as

it is emerging in the universities of Japan, is a restatement of moral ideals common to all highly-developed civilizations, under the impetus of Christianity. But for an insistence upon vestiges in vocabulary and thought that come from Japanese Buddhism it would be very difficult to distinguish one of these modern Buddhists from the radical Christians and liberal Jews who form the ethical culture groups of America.

In so far, however, as Christianity is a matter of the experience of the plain people it must be admitted that, on its intellectual side, it is still a more or less modified monarchy. The relations of God to the individual are conceived of in terms of sovereignty. So far as the orthodoxy of the schools is concerned, with all its splendid insistence upon genuine religious experience, its entire system is based upon divine sovereignty and it will not endure the slightest modification except at the expense of this fundamental conception. Attempts are being made to substitute the parental for the sovereignty conception; but any student of comparative theology of recent day, I think, will admit that so far as systematic thought is concerned such reconstructions are not thoroughgoing enough to meet the demands of the modern man who requires a complete systematization of religion with the totality of his experience. As a matter of fact, religion as it exists among the people at large in Christian lands presupposes Hebraism as its apprehensive mass. And one of the real problems the modern man faces today is whether he can utilize non-Hebraic presuppositions as a basis of a widespread institutional religious life in a world that is both scientific and democratic.

4. It will be apparent, further, to any student of society that religion without institutions is of small significance. Religion apart from an institution has not succeeded, any more than a state has succeeded without political institutions. If religion is to be socially effective, its institutions—and for Christianity this means those of the church—must be adapted to the changing social order. There are men who are by temperament anarchic optimists. They believe that institutions are a hindrance to society, and it matters little whether those institutions are those of state or those of religion. Yet even such transcendentalists form societies of

anarchists in order to make anarchy effective. By the same token the man who wishes to make religion a purely individualist matter is not without justification for the maintenance of such a personal luxury, but he overlooks the fact that in a world like ours religion always has and always must find social expression, and on both its intellectual and its institutional sides must partake of social evolution. So it has come about that religious institutions are in process of evolution as truly as are religious conceptions. Mohammedism itself begins to feel the effect of our modern world and, now that it has broken with political autocracy, is likely within a generation or two to break with that religious autocracy which we call fatalism. The Roman church has not only those new Humanists, the Modernists, but it is already seeing that in its struggle with socialism it must adopt the methods of the settlement. The movements in Asia and particularly in Japan among the non-Christian religions, though not as marked, are none the less of the same general type. The ancient Chinese education has been abandoned and modern textbooks are being introduced throughout the empire. While it is true that it would be a little difficult to regard Confucianism as more than a system of ethics, it can hardly be doubted that the adoption of the Western school will have decided results in the case of those religious survivals like ancestor-worship which Confucianism embodied and preserved. Protestant churches are already passing through rapid changes as the social aspects of religion and the social, not to mention the medical, opportunities of the church as an institution are becoming more apparent.

Thus everywhere social evolution finds expression in an evolution of religious thought and institutions that perpetuate vestiges of simpler and earlier stages. Inevitably such a process is accompanied with struggle, for religious survivals are always a conservative force. Just what will be the outcome of this struggle between the representatives of different stages of social experience in religions only the future can tell. But of one thing we may be sure, there will be no cessation either of the impulse to come into helpful reconciliation with a personally interpreted environment, or of the utilization of social experience to justify, control, enrich, and

systematize such impulse. And just here lies the pressing tasks of the apologist and the theologian. For our modern world needs to be reconvinced that religion is more than a survival, and that the appeal to the universe in terms of personalism is justifiable after concepts inherited from less complex social experience have been abandoned.

IV. THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN RELIGIONS FOR THE SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

In what has been said it must have become evident that a distinction is to be made between religion as a functional psychological expression of life, and *a* religion as a group of beliefs and rites by which this attitude of mind is conditioned and given social expression. The former is as generic as life; the latter is as specific as organisms. The history of religions makes it evident that no one of them can persist unchanged as regulative in a civilization whose moral ideals are superior to its own or whose scientific achievement makes the inherited religious interpretation of existence as a whole, outgrown. When a religion has thus found itself out of sympathy with the growing social environment two results follow: either it has been supplanted by another, as was the case in the Roman Empire when the gods of classic mythology were replaced at first in part by Mithraism and later entirely by Christianity; or the religion has adjusted itself in some fashion as has already in a general way been described, reducing its outgrown elements to vestiges, and becomes a new species of religion, as, e.g., in the evolution of rabbinical Judaism from Hebraism. So, too, in the case of the religion of Greece, the simple original Aryan faith was continuously modified by the artistic anthropomorphism of the Homeric literature as well as by Egyptian and Asiatic influences, the worship of the god Hercules, the rise of the Dionysiac enthusiasm and the mysteries, and the work of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Pindar. With the rise of the great schools of philosophy the Greek religion grew extremely complicated, a cross-section of Grecian society showing the existence of the survivals of all the elements which had at some time been locally dominant. Yet the Greek religion did not stop in its philosophical stage but, after the

conquest of the Asiatic world, Greece and the Graeco-Roman world were invaded by all sorts of oriental beliefs, and the Greeks by the end of the Christian era ceased to possess any exclusive form of religion. In the place of the sharply-defined national faith of Homeric days, the Graeco-Roman Empire possessed a great number of philosophical sects and esoteric religious bodies alongside of popular religion. In it all, however, there was no actual domination of a single religious conception, and classical religion could not withstand the onset of a distinct, unified, aggressive religio-ethical faith like that of Christianity.

If the development of a cosmopolitan civilization thus proves fatal to the more primitive stages of a religion, precisely the opposite is true where a civilization stops at a level set by the religion. The two coalesce. Such, for example, is true in the case of Mohammedanism where the development of the political and religious concept seems to have stopped simultaneously at the stage of an imperfectly moral autocracy. In the break-up of Turkish civilization which is already beginning because of the introduction of Western ideals, Mohammedanism will undoubtedly find itself engaged in a life and death struggle with Christianity on the one side and materialistic agnosticism on the other. But such struggle is not likely to extend far below the level of those social strata affected by Western civilization. The great masses of the empire are likely to continue indefinitely under the control of a religion that fits the state of civilization in which they live. Only as Mohammedans are educated will Mahomet cease to be the prophet.

The struggle between religions is, then, a struggle not only between theologies and philosophies but between social orders. It may occur within a society which, because of economic growth, is differentiating into classes, or it may be due, as in the case of the Asiatic world, to the introduction of new social and religious ideals into an older order. From such a point of view missions became of the utmost sociological significance. Whatever may have been the motive with which Christians undertook to send missionaries of their religion to the devotees of another, whether such motive were the mere ambition to make proselytes or the genuinely altruistic motive to save ignorant souls from the pun-

ishment of the hereafter, missions today are one phase of the great interplay of social ideals which promises so much for the future. In the light of the past there can be no question that changes in the social order will both be conditioned by and will condition religious evolution, as is strikingly illustrated in Japan. But this change should be sharply defined. The religion best fitted to a social order will not be a religion foreign to that order. Social history seems to argue that it is impossible to annihilate one religion by another. Christianity seriously attempted to replace German folk-religion by conventional and wholesale baptisms. But it soon had to make over German gods into saints or devils. Mechanical conversion outside of social transformation is as impossible today as in the days of Charlemagne. What really will happen will be a biological development of religions through appropriation and assimilation. As Judaism took up elements from the religions of Canaan and Babylonia; as Greece and Rome appropriated the religious elements of Asia; as Christianity springing from Judaism was transformed by being rethought in terms of Greek philosophy and institutionized in terms of Roman law, so will the nations of the modern world find themselves possessed of religions in which inherited elements are grouped about some nucleating conception into an organic whole. And this organic whole will be the property of those groups of men to whom it is justified by social experience. In other words, a nation will have several religions, although they may be called by the same general name and have many elements in common. Some of these religions will be so unlike those of earlier stages of social evolution as to constitute a new species. In the struggle which comes between these various embodiments of the religious impulse those elements will disappear which are least in harmony with dominating social conceptions of various social groups, and those will survive which are most in accordance with and can contribute most to the development of superior stages of social evolution.

Prophecy is always risky, but unless we utterly misread the present it would seem that there is already emerging throughout the world, under different names it is true, but none the less essentially identical, a phase of religion the nucleus of which is that of

the teaching of Jesus. It is emphasizing brotherhood because of the divine sonship of those who agree with these religious ideals. On the one hand it cannot believe in an anthropathic God, but on the other it is not ready to deny personality in terms of purpose and reason to the great process in which mankind finds itself involved. Its sympathies are social rather than individual, and its theology is based not on metaphysics of the Godhead interpreted by human analogy but on those judgments of value and those undeniable facts of science which seem to condition all self-expression.

Thus the vanishing point of religious history is still evolution in the sense that the conscious attempt to bring humanity into helpful relationship with that environment with which it finds itself involved and which possess elements which justify our treating it as we treat persons, will never disappear. It is as real as environment and humanity. But the particular phases of religion and the modes of controlling the expression of this generic impulse are parts of social history. That religion which best enables religion to express itself in its increasingly complex social environment will survive all others. Other religions will not altogether disappear but they will become vestiges in the more highly developed religious life. And, in this struggle of religions to express religion, Christianity in its vitally ethical and theological sense is to be such a dominant element that the outcome, despite its varied names, will be essentially Christian. In the theologies of this universal Christianity there will be found all those truths which the other religions embody, but there will be also within them that unifying rational exposition of the way to personal reconciliation with a cosmic God of love which is Christianity's essential contribution to religious evolution. Whatever may be a given society's particular creed, whatever may be its metaphysics, the sense of dependence which science enforces, the need of divine help which human weakness arouses, and the call to sacrifice for social ends that the times demand will be given meaning and justification by the Christian doctrine of reconciliation as it centres about Jesus. And in this doctrine Christianity is but re-expressing the essence of religion itself.